

# The Protocol School of Washington®

INFORMATION FOR THE CITIZEN DIPLOMAT

## Dine Like a Diplomat

### **Distinguish Yourself With Good Manners**

You have been invited to an elegant, four-course dinner honoring an important ambassador to the United States. This exciting invitation is a great opportunity for you, as a citizen diplomat, to brush up on the table manners that will help ensure you have a lovely and comfortable evening.

After an ice-breaking “mix and mingle” featuring champagne with tiny bubbles, your host suggests that guests move into the dining room. (We couldn’t resist mentioning bubble size. Tiny bubbles are one characteristic of a good champagne.)

In the dining room, approach the right side of your chair and enter it from your left side. While a woman shouldn’t assume a man will seat her at dinner, it is gracious to accept this

courtesy with a sincere “thank you.” Sit straight



**Pamela Eyring, Owner &  
Director of The Protocol  
School of Washington**

against the back of your chair. Keep elbows close to your sides when eating and never place elbows or forearms on the table. If you have adopted the continental style of eating, you can rest your hands on the table from the wrist up.

The host leads the way by picking up his napkin first. Follow suit. If you need to excuse yourself during dinner, simply say in a quiet voice, “Please excuse me.”

Push your chair back from the table and exit from the same side you entered. Leave your napkin on your chair and push the chair back under the table.

### **Conquer the Continental Style**

When you eat in the continental style, the most noticeable difference is how you handle your knife and fork to cut food. Place the knife in your right palm and the fork in your left. Secure them with your thumbs and curl the rest of the fingers around the handles of the knife and fork. Your index fingers extend down to the blade of your knife and just below the tines of your fork. Cut one piece of meat at a time.

Keeping your fork tines down, use the fork to pierce the meat with the tines. Bring the fork, tines down, to your mouth by twisting your wrist and

*The world was my oyster, but I used the wrong fork.*

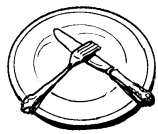
*Oscar Wilde*

***Polished table manners will distinguish you from the crowd in  
Diplomatic, Social, and Business arenas.***

*(continued)*

raising the fork to your mouth. The knife remains in your hand. A small amount of potatoes, rice, or vegetables may be placed on the fork tines with the meat.

To indicate to the server that you are not finished, place the knife across the center of the plate with the handle at four o'clock and the blade at eleven



**Rest**

o'clock. The fork tines rest over the knife with its handle at seven o'clock. (Think of an inverted 'V'.)

To indicate you are finished, place the knife and fork on your plate with their tips at ten o'clock and handles at four o'clock. Place the knife above the fork and put the fork tines down. Whew! Now that you have mastered the knife and fork, it is time to address the entire place setting. Ready?



**Finished**

**A Four Course  
Place Setting**

Your mother was correct when she said to begin using utensils from the outside of the place setting and work your way toward the plate. For a traditional American dinner, two forks will be set to the left of the plate with the salad fork on the outside. A soup spoon will be found on the outside of the plate's right, with a dinner knife and salad knife closer to the plate. The salad knife is slightly shorter than the dinner knife. A dessert spoon and fork may be placed above the plate. Your bread plate is always placed on the upper left of the setting. Break your bread with your fingers. Butter each bite-sized piece individually while the bread rests on your bread plate. Never butter in midair.

If shrimp cocktail is being served, use the cocktail fork that may be nestled in the soup spoon. If fruit cocktail is served, use your spoon. If there is a plate under the compote that contains the fruit cocktail, put your spoon on that

plate when you are finished. Your soup spoon also ends up on the plate under the soup bowl. If there are no plates under the compote or bowl, then the utensil is placed back in the serving piece. The very best advice for filling your soup spoon correctly can be summarized in an ancient couplet. "Like little ships sent out to sea, push your spoon away from thee." Sip the soup from the side of the spoon.

Although the finger bowl is largely a thing of the past, you may encounter one at a formal dinner. It will arrive after the dessert course. Simply dip one set of fingertips, dry them and then dip and dry the fingertips of your other hand. As you leave the table, place your napkin in loose folds to the left of your plate.

Understanding how to conduct yourself at a formal dinner will increase the likelihood of having a lovely and memorable time. ***Bon Appetit!***



**The Protocol School of Washington®**

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